

CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY

I want to speak about difference in unity, or to make it even sharper, about Christian controversy.

To some^{of course,} this is a contradiction. Unity does not contain differences, they say. And Christians do not have controversy, or, if they do, they are not Christian. But if anyone thinks that is what is meant by ecumenicity, think again. Or better yet, read the Bible. "When Peter came to Antioch," says Paul (Gal. 2:11), "I withstood him to his face." You see, there were differences, there were controversies even in the early, undivided, catholic ^{and ecumenical} ~~and ecumenical~~ church of the apostles.

Roger Hazelton of Oberlin writes rather sharply of the danger of so misinterpreting Christian ecumenicity that it makes us too timid to disagree honestly with anyone. "In an ecumenical gathering," he writes, "one tends to speak cautiously, carefully.. with excessive politeness... There comes into vogue what may be called an ecumenical style.. colorless, ^{and} ponderous. It is, to be sure, an eminently churchly style (patterned after) biblical and liturgical phrasing, and staying comfortably within the traditional framework of images and ideas. However, one does miss the inquiring ~~boldness~~ boldness and creative tang (of genuine theological thought) and one resents a bit the anonymous, declarative and committee-produced quality of ecumenical statements." (*New Accounts in Contemporary Theology*, 1960, p 97)

There is no anonymous, ecumenical pussy-footing with the Apostle Paul. He was a Christian ecumaniac and he speaks his piece as the Spirit moves him, not as diplomatic churchmanship might direct. "When Peter came to Antioch I withstood him to his face." Now, ^{do not be alarmed!} I am not planning to stir up any controversy here just to prove my own apostolic boldness. I'd rather ask what Christian lessons can be learned from this kind of an encounter, and how we can learn to live together in unity with our differences as Christians.

I once read a sermon by a Dr. Blackwelder on this text in Galatians. He found three points in it. First, Paul had the courage to stand--and that takes courage. Second, he had the courage to withstand--and that takes even more courage sometimes, as when Paul found himself standing here not only against Peter, chief of the apostles (Paul, you remember, calls himself the least of the apostles), but also against his best friend, Barnabas. "Even Barnabas was carried away," he says sadly in verse 13. And third, Paul had the power to understand. Stand, withstand and understand. ~~(Paul could stand and withstand because he understood.)~~

It is the third point I am interested in, not the standing and withstanding, but the understanding. I don't think I have to make a case for controversy in Korea. We are quite able to do that without coaching. We're glutted with people who love to stand and withstand. What we really need is at a little less withstanding, and a little more understanding. Paul could stand and withstand as a Christian because he understood, because he had made the right first choice, the choice of Christ.

Note how this account of that early apostolic controversy ends. It begins with disagreement, but it ends with the secret of how to carry on a controversy, when it is necessary, and still remain Christian. The secret is in verse 20: "I am crucified with Christ," says Paul. "It is no longer I that live but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

Just as the starting point of unity and agreement is always Christ, so also, although this is not so readily recognized, the starting point of disagreement among Christians must also be Christ, or ~~the controversy will~~ their differences will not be Christian.

What I am trying to say is put more clearly in an interesting book I have been reading, Fundamentalism and the Church by Gabriel Hebert, an Anglican whose heart has long been troubled by the history of division in student work in England between two Protestant organizations, the Student Christian Movement, and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. He writes from within the S.C.M. but with as much warm-hearted appreciation of those on the other side as I have rarely seen. He is looking for a cure for the crippling spirit of controversy, but does not make the mistake of denying the right of controversy, and that is a very hard thing to do, indeed.

He begins with the proposition that "It is impossible that a controversy between believing Christians should end in final disagreement; for Christ has made them one." I'm not sure that I can accept all of that proposition; I'll have to think it over a bit more. It was true of the controversy between Paul and Peter ~~with~~ which we began, but I am not sure that it can be true of all controversies between Christians this side of the grave--given the stubborn obstinacy of some Christians' minds, including my own.

But I do wholeheartedly agree with ^{Hebert} ~~him~~ when he goes on to say that there is a right way and a wrong way to conduct a Christian controversy, and that the right way "needs to start with the unity which God has made," that is, with the unity that is already ours in Christ. (p. 14) The wrong way, on the other hand, he says, always starts with the determined intention to prove that I am right and he is wrong. "In doing so, I state what I take to be his position; and this in itself is a most irritating thing to do, for I know how I feel when others do it to me. I prove that he is wrong; but if I seem to have won the argument I have really lost it, for I have sent him away determined to think up all the counter-arguments which he failed to express adequately when he was arguing with me. In the discussion I have stood before him not as a brother in Christ, but as a rival and an opponent". (p. 15)

What, then, is the Christian way to conduct a controversy with Christians? To differ in unity? Let me suggest three simple points:

First, begin in Christ. Begin with the assumption

that you are both Christians. Make at least that much of a concession, that your opponent is at least that much right, that he is still your brother. Do you think for a minute that in the apostolic controversy Paul thought that Peter was not a Christian?

Second, proceed in Christ. There is no Christian way of fighting out your differences in your own strength and your own wisdom. Self-reliance shatters unity; but reliance on Christ can preserve it. "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus," said Paul to the quarreling factions ~~among~~ at Philippi. Be humble. Allow yourself the humility to believe that in yourself you have not always been right, and your brother, the opponent, may not always have been wrong.

And thirdly, end in Christ. I am not ready to go as far as Hebert and insist that Christians must always end their controversies in complete agreement, but I would plead for two things: One, greater expectation of agreement, and two, recognition of the fact that even when agreement may fail, we are no worse off than when we began, and we began, remember, in Christ.

One of the happiest things about the days in which we live is precisely the greater expectation of agreement that has sprung up between Roman Catholics and Protestants. What a change, what a happy change, and what a sudden change this has been. If you will forgive a personal illustration.. I have no sister. We were a family of five sons up in Pyengyang across the line, and the nearest thing we had to a sister was a female cousin from Oregon whom my mother imported all the way across the Pacific in the forlorn hope of civilizing her fine male savages. We were hard on the poor girl, as you may well imagine, but how we missed her when she went back to America after two years with us. But then she married a Catholic and virtually dropped out of our lives. That was the kind of a relationship we had then. There was a distance between us that was in some ways colder than open enmity. But things have changed, and how wonderful it is to be back on speaking terms. I never fail to drop in on my cousin now, when I am in the States. She has five boys herself. It was contagious. And the youngest, she tells me with pride, is the only little Catholic boy in Medford, Oregon, named for a Protestant missionary, Samuel Moffett Naumes.

Of course this is all very superficial, you may say, ^{and sentimental} but is it? Is it really superficial to begin our ^{and sentimental} reacquaintance with love. There is time and enough to face our differences honestly, to speak the truth to each other as we must. But ~~Paul~~ St. Paul himself bids us speak that truth with love. There is never a time when there is no time for Christian love.

This, the love of Christ and for each other, readies us for the profounder unities, and the profounder disagreements as well, which will come. There will be the disagreements, and there should be no hiding them, but there will also be the bridges, bringing with them that greater expectation of of agreement in Christ.

Let me mention just two of them in closing: the surge of Biblical studies in Catholic circles, and the Protestant re-appraisal of tradition.

the ^{recommended} books which were by Roman Catholics. 50 years ago the only recommended books about Catholicism would have been anti-Catholic polemics - of the Roman, Romanism and Rebellion category.

On the new interest in ^{tradition} patristics in Protestant circles - I hope this will save us from a common Protestant plague, a theological faddism, which snaps us ~~lightly~~ capriciously from one far-out newly-published theological work to the next, without the stabilizing perspective of deep roots in the wisdom of the fathers ^{which are} ~~have~~ begun to learn the difference between tradition and traditionism, as the old epigram has it, between "the living faith of the dead," (tradition), and "the dead faith of the living" (traditionism).

We are at last learning to listen before we speak to each other, and to understand before we criticize (Pelikan), and scholars like Jacques Pelikan at Yale are finding new depths in a combination of values which he describes as "Catholic substance and Protestant piety".

These are some of the new expectations of great

But as I say ^{soon} - if we do not read all of them -
if even in our remaining deficiencies we can learn to

Begin in Christ -
Proceed in Christ -

then even when we find we are no wiser off than when we began - for we began, ~~as you~~ remember in Christ. So too, let us end in Christ.

Some Thoughts and Suggestions About How to Live in Real
Christian Fellowship with Other Missionaries Having
Differing Ideas and Convictions

COMMENT: I would be interested in the results which follow carrying out these suggestions plus ideas which help to attain this goal of real fellowship more successfully.

- No. 1. Make a list of all of the good qualities of the other missionary or missionaries. Think and pray about this. Spend 2-3 days collecting these things. Carry a notebook around with you and write down things when and as they come to you. Along with this listing write down all the good things you know of they have done.
- No. 2. Make a list of all of your criticisms of them, reasons why you object to (them, him or her) write them down. Be sure you get all of them down. After, and only after, that read Romans 2:1. Then go over your criticisms one by one. Do it soul searchingly and prayerfully. Ask and honestly answer the following questions:
 - a. Are any of these criticisms an example of Romans 2:1 in my life?
 - b. Do any of these criticisms point to any of my past unforgiven sins?
- No. 3. Ask yourself - "Are my reactions, my inward reactions, to this person such as I would be happy to explain to Christ were He to appear and talk with me in person about these reactions?"
- No. 4. Dealing with Criticisms from your coworkers. If they have criticism to make of you and do it to your face - write down the criticism. Tell them you will think about it carefully and let them know your thoughts later. Avoid trying to answer it at the time. Then take each of these criticisms and consider it thoughtfully and prayerfully. Ask Christ to show you anything He wants you to learn about this and how to handle them.
- No. 5. Dealing with Specific Problems. Before discussing specific problems that come up, or arguing with your fellow missionary about them, think and pray about them. Ask Christ to show you all of the things you need to know about it. In other words try to think the problem through and see both sides of the question. There are usually two sides to a question. Write out your thoughts about them. Writing them out helps to clarify your thinking.
- No. 6. If you become angry with a fellow worker, ask yourself: "Is this a case of righteous anger or indignation?" As you are thinking about it remember what one Hindu gentleman said about righteous indignation in a Group Therapy Class. "Righteous indignation is anger rationalized to or for your own satisfaction." Righteous indignation does occur. However much of the time what is termed as righteous indignation comes under the category described by the Hindu gentleman.

- No. 7. Pray each day for the person with whom you are having difficulties or with whom you desire closer Christian fellowship. Pray that each of you, and you especially, will see them as Christ sees the difficulties. Pray that each of you will see the truth. Pray that your heart will be filled with love and understanding for the other person.
- No. 8. If the difficulties are with one who has been in the field longer remember changes are constantly taking place. The other individual may be just as faithfully following what he was taught - just as faithfully as you are. This is especially true in a professional field like medicine. Things change so rapidly in this whole area. I know people who graduated after me were doing things which I would have considered "malpractice". Also remember all the newest ideas are not always the best. I remember in the early 30's there was a craze among some child guidance people to say children should be allowed just to grow. Showing too much affection was not good. Hardly anyone honestly believes this now, yet it was very important in many circles. I am sure in other fields - education, theology, engineering, and other areas similar things are true. Both the person who has been present longer and the one shorter may feel the other is wrong. There is room for honest disagreements.
- No. 9. Pray, believing that God will help work out the problem in true Christian fellowship. Pray, believing that the other person wants God's answer too. Any person who has spent two or three terms in a mission field has had many experiences of guidance and leading from God. They have also made mistakes. Both younger and more experienced missionaries make mistakes and will continue to do so. Both younger and more experienced missionaries do many things for God. Anyone who has taken training and got to the field having had to make the necessary changes to come also has to have experience and faith with God.
- No. 10. It is my conviction that anyone who follows such a procedure will see a marked improvement within thirty days. One of the biggest negative witnesses of us missionaries comes from our failure to demonstrate among ourselves Christ's loving peaceful solution to problems which arise among us missionaries.

James A. Stringham, M.D.
Nur Manzil Psychiatric Center
Lal Bagh, Lucknow, U.P. India.
Oct. 3, 1963.

- 483 - O God of Love
- 416 - Dear Lord & Father
- 198 - When I Survey
- 318 - There Is a Place

(1)

An Controversy (or Differences in Unity)

Unity does not contain difference, they say

To some this is a contradiction. Christians don't have controversies, and if they do, they're not Chr. But if you think that's what ~~is~~ is meant ~~mean~~ when I ~~plead~~ ^{by} for ecumenicity, think again. Or better yet, read your Bible. "When Peter came to Antioch," says Paul, "I withstood him to his face." (Galatians 2:11) These were differences, these were controversies even in the early and undivided apostolic and catholic Christian ch. ^{the danger of} ~~the danger of~~ ^{misinterpretation} ~~misinterpretation~~ ^{of ecumenicity} ~~of ecumenicity~~, "In an ecumenical gathering, one tends to speak cautiously, carefully... with excessive politeness... This comes into vogue what may be called an ecumenical style... colorless and ponderous. It is, to be sure, an eminently churchly style [patterned [after] biblical & liturgical phrasing, and staying comfortably within the traditional framework of images & ideas. However,] [but] one does miss the inquiring boldness & creative daring [of genuine theological thought] and one receives a bit the anonymous, declarative & committee-produced quality of ecumenical statements."

There's no anonymous jury-footing with Paul. "When Peter came to Antioch I withstood him to his face." Dr. Blackwelder makes quite a point out of it: ① Paul had the courage to stand - and that takes courage. ~~when you find yours~~ ② He had the courage to withstand - and that takes even more courage sometimes - as when Paul found himself standing here not only against Peter, chief of the apostles (Paul, you remember calls himself, least of the apostles); but also against his best friend, Barnabas. "Even Barnabas was carried away," he says sadly (vs. 13). ③ Paul had the power to understand. Paul could stand and withstand because he understood. He had courage and control because he

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~~had made the choice of Christ.~~ → That's where the whole passage ends, with the secret of how to carry on a controversy, when it is necessary, and still remain a Christian. The secret is in verse 20. "I am crucified with Christ," says Paul. "It is no longer I that live but Christ who lives in me, & the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

- ① gluttoned with people who stand and withstand. What we really need is Christian understanding in our controversies. "Paul could stand and withstand as a Christian because he understood.." because he had made the right first choice, the choice of Christ.

Just as the starting point unity and agreement is always Christ, so also the starting point of ~~the~~ disagreement among Christians must also be Christ.

I've been reading an interesting book. Fundamentalism and the Church by Gabriel Hebert, an Anglican whose heart has ^{long} been troubled by the ~~long~~ history of division in student work in England between the SCM and the IVF. He writes from within the SCM but with as much warm-hearted appreciation of those on the other side as I've rarely seen. He's looking for a cure for the crippling spirit of controversy, but doesn't make the mistake of being the spirit of controversy — and that's a hard thing to do.

He begins with the proposition that "It is impossible that a controversy between believing Christians should end in final disagreement; for Christ has made —

them one." That I'll have to think over a bit more. It was true of this controversy between Peter + Paul with which we began, but I'm still not sure it's always true this side of the grave - given the stubborn obstinacy of even the believer's mind, including my own.

But I do wholeheartedly agree with him when he goes on to say that there is a right way and a wrong way to conduct a dis controversy, and the right way "needs to start with the unity (p. 14) which God has made," i.e. with ~~the~~ our unity in Christ. The wrong way, on the other hand, he says, always starts with the determined intention to prove that I am right + he is wrong. "In doing so, I state what I take to be his position; and this in itself is a most irritating thing to do, for I know how I feel when others do it to me. I prove that he is wrong; but if I seem to have won the argument I have really lost it, for I have sent him away determined to think up all the counter-arguments which he failed to express adequately when he was arguing with me. In the discussion I have stood before him not as a brother in Christ, but as a rival and an opponent." (p. 15)

What's the Christian way to conduct a controversy - with Christians? let me suggest

- ① Begin in Christ. Begin with that concession - your opponent is at least that much right. He is still then your brother. Do you doubt for a minute that Paul had Peter in Christ?
- ② Proceed in Christ - there's no one way of controversy in your own strength, your own wisdom. Allow "Have this mind in you which was also in St James - send Paul to the jailers at Philippi". Be humble. Allow

yourself the humility to believe that you are not infallible, and your ~~of~~ brother, the opponent, may not always be wrong. "Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others."

③ End in Christ. I'm not ready to go as far as Herbert & insist that we not always end their continuance in agreement — but I would plead for ① greater expectation of agreement — & ② for recognition that when agreement fails, ~~we are~~ we are no worse off than when we began, & we began, remember, in Christ.

Christian Controversy

"Confronted by other theologians in an ecumenical gathering, one tends to speak cautiously, carefully, and with excessive politeness... Thus there comes into vogue what may be called an ecumenical style.. which is somewhat colorless and ponderous. It is, to be sure, an eminently chilly style, patterned closely upon biblical and liturgical phrases and staying comfortably within the traditional framework of images & ideas. Hence, one does miss the inspiring boldness & of creative leap of general theological thought; and one resents a bit the anonymous, declarative, and committee-produced quality of ecumenical statements."

- Reger Hagellon, New Accents in Contemp. Theology, 1960, p. 97

We've been too quick to agree. When Anglican & Greek Orthodox agree to believe in "Real Presence of the Eucharist, H.S. - their signed agreement exceeds more than it needs - p. 99 ff. We need had more of definition.

"In essentials unity, in non-essentials charity" ... suggests the way that what is essential may be defined as that which can be agreed upon, while the non-essential is the realm of stubborn difference." - p. 100

"Unity does not mean agreement only, but belonging to one another because - and not in spite of - the varieties of gifts bestowed upon us by God..." - 101

"Only in a confront eye like ours can agreement have such high priority and disagreement seem a bothersome reminder."

Gal. 2:11 "I withstood Peter to his face."

Peter

In Sam Moffitt

John Owen on Church Peace

A paper prepared for the
February 5, 1962 meeting of
The Pusan Evangelical Library
Association - by Theodore Hard

In this day in Korea where there is so much of church splits and dissension among Christians interest is raised again in the solution of earlier days to similar problems. John Owen's treatise, entitled A Discourse Concerning Christian Love and Peace, was written in a land and day when civil war raged over religious matters, when an Anglican archbishop was beheaded by order of a Presbyterian parliament, when Christians not only slaughtered Christians in battle, but after the battle slew the wounded and prisoners. In such a day we will hardly expect polemics written about the issues to be ones of quiet reason, and with words of love and peace. But we shall underestimate the greatness of Christian character and passionate loyalty to Christ of the Puritans of old England, as well as their true Bible scholarship, if we look at that history from the viewpoint of sectarian strife alone. To read this treatise, also entitled "A Discourse Concerning Evangelical Love, Church-Peace and Unity", is to read the thoughts of a godly soul wrestling with a great crisis in the life of the church. Though written against a harsh and dispartorial antagonist the quiet cadences of his paragraphs, the close reasoning, the objectivity, etc., are such that they humble us of a more superficial, glib, and compromising age.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

John Owen (1616-1683) was a contemporary of such well known men as Richard Baxter (1615-1691), Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), John Milton (1608-1674), John Locke (1632-1704), John Bunyan (1628-1688) and George Fox (1624-1691) founder of the Quakers. When the Westminster Assembly began he was 27 years old. Educated at Queen's College, Oxford, under the able Calvinist Thomas Barlow, who taught mathematics and philosophy, he was a Bachelor of Arts at 16, and a Master of Arts at age 19.

Under strong religious conviction and deeply disturbed over Laud's policies in the church he was compelled to withdraw from Oxford (though he was to become its Chancellor some fifteen years later in 1651.) He was a chaplain and tutor in earlier years of two titled families of note, but lost his place by siding with parliament in the Civil War. That prolonged and bitter, exhausting struggle was directed politically against the king in the interest of parliamentary government, and religiously against the Church of England in the interests of obtaining freedom from enforced conformity with the state church. To see the part he played in these years a few items will suffice.

The day after Archbishop Laud was beheaded at the order of the Presbyterian Long Parliament Owen was called upon to preach a sermon before the same parliament. But he was not such a man as were some of the intolerant Presbyterians of the time. A year later, 1646, he preached before the same Long Parliament a sermon which showed his tendency toward the more tolerant Independent or Congregational systems of church government. These were the days when the Westminster Assembly sat in session (1643-1649) and among the commissioners were ten or twelve Independents, of profound learning and piety, like many of their Presbyterian confederates. In 1649 Owen was taken to Ireland by Cromwell as his chaplain, where, he governed Trinity College. In 1650 he went to Scotland with Cromwell, then in 1651 became chancellor of Oxford University, and dean of Christ-Church. Men who were students at Oxford during this period under the Commonwealth boast such names as John Locke, William Penn, and Sir Christopher Wren. He must have been often in contact with John Milton who was Latin secretary to Cromwell. Both Milton and Owen survived the Restoration, Owen preaching often to congregations of Independents and Presbyterians, yet also being

in favor with Charles II and James II.

However, he was no straddler of fences, or follower of the crowd. In a day of Laud's high-handedness he left Oxford in protest. In a day of intolerant Presbyterian supremacy he moved to Independency. In 1660 the Presbyterians deprived him of his deanery. In 1664, when episcopacy and the monarchy were restored, he was among the non-Anglicans who were all prevented from meetings for worship in groups of more than five persons unless they used the Prayerbook (Conveticle Act). And under the Five Mile Act, 1665, he and other non-conformists were forbidden to come within five miles of any city or incorporated town, or teach in any school unless they promised they would not at any time "endeavor the alteration of government in church and state."

His collected works run to 21 sizeable volumes, and his writings are highly prized by lovers of Puritan and Calvinistic literature. Among his greatest are his superb work on the Holy Spirit, and his important commentary on the epistle to the Hebrews. He wrote powerful, lasting works in such diversified fields as systematic theology, exegetical literature polemics, and devotional works.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of the discourse before us is that of church peace, of what some call Irenics. The subject is rather broadly approached, but is not a systematic and comprehensive treatise on all aspects of the subject. Its particular task is first, to justify the course of the Puritan churches who refused to conform to the Church of England, and, second, to make a defense to the charge of schism.

"The principal charge against us, and that whereinto all other may be resolved, is our non-conformity unto the present constitutions of the Church of England. For hence we are accused to be guilty of the want of Christian love and peaceableness, of schism, and an inclination to all sorts of divisions, contrary to the rules and precepts of the gospel." (p.10)

Before Owen begins his defense, he warns of the necessity of avoiding invective and of walking in love and peace with all men. Then he reminds his readers that even if he were readily to conform with the Church of England such action would not free him from a charge of schism, for he, as well as the Church of England would still be under the same charge from the Church of Rome. It is his desire to make his reply according to the Scripture, and to please Christ, who is the judge.

SUMMARY

His argument proceeds roughly as follows. First, it is truly incumbent upon us to love all mankind. However, that love for men must not obscure the fact that men are sinners, and that apart from Christ none can be saved from damnation. The race is thus divided between those that love Christ and those who do not. Love for the latter ones will be expressed in compassionate desire to lead them to salvation in Christ. But it must not obscure the fact of their lost estate apart from Christ.

In Chapter three he discusses the church under the threefold aspects of its invisibility, its visibility, and its particular assemblies or churches. As he views the catholic church as simultaneously militant and invisible he knows that the remainder of sin in us will produce in us divisions and schisms, as well as differences in profession. But we have the obligation to see all believers as in Christ, and without evil surmisings and irregular judging to seek a peaceable walking and unity with other Christians. He says, p.29

"That the sons or children of this church of 'Jerusalem which is above, and is the mother of us all', should on the account of their various apprehensions of some things relating to religion or the worship of God, unavoidably attending their frail and imperfect condition in

this world, yea, or of any schisms or divisions ensuing thereon, proceeding from corrupt and not thoroughly mortified affections, by warranted to hate, judge, despise, or condemn one another, much more to strive by external force to coerce, punish, or destroy them that differ from them, is as foreign to the gospel, as that we should believe in Mahomet, and not in Jesus Christ. Whatever share, therefore, we are forced to bear in differences with, or divisions from, the members of this church (that is, any who declare and evidence themselves so to be, by a visible and regular profession of faith and obedience)... we acknowledge it to be our duty. . . to endeavor after the strictest communion with them in all spiritual things that the gospel doth require, or whereof our condition in this world is capable."

Likewise, secondly, though there be variations in the visible church, says Owen,

"In this catholic visible church, as comprehensive of all who throughout the world outwardly own the gospel, there is an acknowledgment of 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism,' which are a sufficient foundation of that love, union, and communion among them, which they are capable, or, or are required of the,." (p.32)

Owen acknowledges the Church of England to be a part of this catholic church, and "as sound and healthful a part of the catholic church as any in the world." (p.35) To this catholic visible church is owed Christian love and "constant communion." We note this somewhat surprising acknowledgement of Owens, and see his fairness and magnanimity of expression.

Thirdly, the church is viewed in its aspect as being constituted in large part by particular churches (congregations, we can say). For reasons of sin or ignorance men have differed in opinion about the proper government and practice of these churches. But, says Owen,

"There will indeed by a distinct and separate practice in the things wherein the difference lies, which in itself . . . need not on either side to be schismatical." (p.44)

Churches may differ, and thus have separate practice, says Owen. The main issue before Owen, however, is whether by censures or any kind of power, churches or persons can force others in the church to submit to their particular way of government or practice. Owen points out that true communion in the church does not consist only of quiet subjection to rulers in the church, if they be self-appointed or rule under false pretension. (p.45) Similarly, in the cases of churches which have utterly departed from Christ we may recognize that some individuals in such churches are true believers, but we are required to be separate from these believers organizationally. "Our life is to be toward them as persons relating unto Jesus Christ. . . but all communion with them in the acts of false worship is forbidden unto us." "We think of the divided church in the division of Judah and Israel, and though Israel reached its depth of apostasy and degeneracy in the days of Ahab and Jezebel, yet God had preserved to himself 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal and had respect to them "as his people, because of those secret ones, and because the token of his covenant was yet in their flesh; affording them an extraordinary ministry by his prophets, when the ordinary by priests and Levites was utterly ceased." Yet communion with them by Judah was impossible, it would seem. (my comment).

As far as any forcing their way upon us, says Owen,

"Much more may any refuse the communion of such churches, if they impose on them their corruptions, errors, failings, and mistakes, as the condition of their communion: for hereby they directly make themselves lords over the faith and worship of the disciples of Christ, and arvoid of all authority from him in what they so do or impose." (p.50) (This will be commented on later.)

In short, Owen summarizes as follows:

"Some kind of communion we may hold with them that are of no instituted or particular churches, or whose church-state is rejected, even as a person excommunicated is to be admonished as a brother. And some kind of communion we may lawfully refuse with some true churches." (p.52)

Two principal considerations, then, govern the matter of communion with particular churches which we hold as true churches of Christ.

"1. That nothing sinful in itself, or unto us, be required of us as the condition of communion. 2. That we may in such churches obtain the immediate end of their institution and our conjunction with them, which is our edification in faith, love, and obedience." (p.52)

But, says Owen, even if a church errs in both these considerations and thus we cannot join with it, that is not to say their errors are absolutely destructive of their particular state of being a church. This distinction is basis to Owen. We may separate from a church without our considering it to be apostate, he would say.

In Chapter Four Owen deals with the causes of schism. It is well to note his view of the nature of schism so that mere separation not be identified with it. We list his points briefly.

The first cause of schism is the misapprehension of evangelical unity. This unity consists of, 1. a spiritual oneness in the same body of Christ, 2. a unity of confession of the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, in which differences in precise conception are held with mutual condescension and forbearance. 3. Is is a unity of love, sine qua non, for without love all appearances of union are valueless. 4. The unity also consists of a submission unto edification to the Lord in the ordinances for church government and worship which He has set up in the Bible, and the administration of which he has enabled some to well perform through gifts which he bestows.

To aim at such true evangelical unity and leave all other subsidiary or organizational considerations temporarily aside will provide, says Owen, a natural way of healing that will eventually and naturally lead to true unity. Here he distinguishes between "evangelical union" and "external uniformity" and condemns that spirit which seeks to force conformity in externals. This is a distinction made three centuries ago that ought to be made more clearly by our ecumenical zealots of today. Owen is surprisingly modern. Or perhaps we can say that the problems we face today are as old as the church itself.

The second cause of schism is the neglect of known gospel duty. Owen subdivides this by describing gospel duty as, 1. preaching the gospel for the conversion of sinners, 2, edification of those who believe, 3. holy living, particularly of the those in the ministry, and, 4. the due exercise of gospel discipline, which latter must always be in the interest of restoring the sinner in love.

Owen then list principles which seduce churches into sin and mispractice, such as confidence of place, contempt of the people, trust in worldly grandeur, a conceit concerning their knowledge, and, lastly, the presence in the church of false teachers and "broachers of novel, corrupt and heretical doctrines." It may be well to comment here that the last item on the list isto many people, it seems, the primary and single concern, the other questions or dangers neglected. It would appear that the Pharisees in Jesus' day had all the faults except the last, which they claimed was the error of the Sadducees, whom they opposed so violently. We must avoid the same "deed" orthodoxy.

In Chapter Five, the concluding chapter, Owen presents his reasons for non-conformity with the Church of England. They are the application of those principles we have discussed above in the specific situation of his time.. He first iterates the principle that the rulers of the

church have the authority to command only what Christ has already commanded, and they can make no condition of membership but that which Christ has commanded (pp. 108,109) As to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 Owen points out that that council expressly declared (in Owen's words), "that nothing but necessary things (that is, such as are so from other reasons antecedently unto their prescriptions and appointments) ought to be required of any Christians in the communion of worship of the church" and the temporary abstinence was directed to avoid a present scandal which might have hindered the gospel and this was not a denial of liberty, but a temporary foregoing of the use of the liberty. Paul, in Romans 14,15 teaches the liberty of Christians in similar matters. We comment here that it would be well in the Korean churches with which we labor if their constitution or actions of their church courts reflected these distinctions clearly. In the Presbyterian Church with which many of us are connected the forbidding, or rather the warning in respect to drinking alcoholic beverages must take one of several distinct positions, but seems to avoid so doing in the present administration of these warnings or prohibitions. Is it, for example, their position that it is a sin to drink wine, or is it their position that we ought not to drink because of possible scandal or offense? The clarity of Acts 15 is to be desired in all church pronouncements. What Paul says to infant churches of the first century seems too strong meat for churches of the 20th century!

Owen, in part of his defense against the Church of England, asserts the very argument that he says the church's leading scholars used to justify their secession from Rome. He says.

"The sum of what is pleased by them is, 'That the being of the catholic church lies in essentials: that for a particular church to disagree from all other particular churches in some extrinsic and accidental things, is not to separate from the catholic church, so as to cease to be a church; but still whatever church makes such extrinsic things the necessary conditions of communion, so as to cast men out of the church, who yield not to them, is schismatical in its so doing, and the separation from it is so far from being schism, that being cast out of that church on those terms only, returns them unto the communion of the catholic church.'" (p.125)

Or to continue in the same vein:

"... where unscriptural conditions of communion, indispensably to be submitted unto and observed, are by any church imposed on those whom they expect or require to join in their fellowship, communion, and order; if they on whom they are so imposed, do thereon withhold or withdraw themselves from the communion of the church, especially in the acts, duties, and parts of worship, wherein a submission unto these conditions is expressed whither verbally or virtually, they are not thereon to be esteemed guilty of schism; but the whole fault of the divisions which ensue thereon, is to be charged on them who insist on the necessity of their imposition. (p.125)

Those matters demanded by the Church of England were, 1. assent to and use of its liturgy, 2. canonical submission unto the ecclesiastical government of the church and unto the administration of the discipline thereof, 3. use and observation of the ceremonies used in the church, and, 4. in some cases an oath of canonical obedience.

In conclusion Owen asserts the right of Christians to form into churches separate from the government and liturgy of the Church of England, as true assemblies of the church of Jesus Christ. He admits that in such case there is a separation from the Church of England, but not a schism, and a separation such that true communion is still retained.

" . . . we do preserve our communion entire with the church of England (that is, all the visible professors of the gospel of this nation), as it is a part of the catholic church. . . Our non-admittance of the present government and discipline of the church . . we have accounted for before. But we are one with the whole body of the professors of the Protestant religion, in a public avowment of the same faith.

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"Continuing therefore in the constant profession of the same faith with all other Protestants in the nation, and the whole body thereof, as united in the profession of it under one civil or political head; and having antecedently no evangelical obligation upon us unto local communion in the same ordinance of worship numerically with any particular or parochial church; and being prohibited from any such communion by the terms, conditions, and customs indispensably annexed unto it by the laws of the land and the church, which are not lawful for us to observe, being Christ's freemen; it being moreover our duty to assemble ourselves in societies for the celebration of the worship of God in Christ, as that which is expressly commanded; we are abundantly satisfied, that however we may be censured, judged, or condemned by men, in and for what we do, yet that he doth both accept us here, and will acquit us hereafter, who we serve and seek in all things to obey."

(pp. 158,159)

Thus ends this remarkable treatise, so careful, gracious, and conscientious a document that we can well take heed to it in content, mode of reasoning, and spirit. The very last sentence breathes the spirit we so need today in our churches:

"... we shall endeavor also to exercise all duties of the same love, peaceableness, and gentleness towards them by who we are hated and reviled."

This treatise, first published in 1672, was written in a time (precisely which year, I do not know) when a civil war raged in England, or, when, that war being over, the Stuarts and the Church of England reigned supreme again. Our present conflicts are tame in comparison. May our hearts be as calm and reasonable and magnanimous, and our adherence to principles as clear and true, as John Owen's.

"A discourse concerning Evangelical Love, Church-Peace and Unity", is found in Vol xxi of the Works of John Owen edited by Thomas Russel, published in London in 1826 for Richard Baynes.